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Wednesday, 12 April 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Haley	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2017/315, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom is honoured to present, on behalf of our other penholders — the United States and France — a draft resolution condemning the events of 4 April in the Khan Shaykhun area of southern Idlib in the Syrian Arab Republic. The events in Khan Shaykhun were the worst of human acts. They have dominated the international agenda over the past eight days. The events of that day and the manner in which the victims suffered mean that the Security Council must act.

When judging how exactly to act, we must recall the Council's determination in 2013, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and in multiple resolutions since, to remove and destroy all chemical weapons in Syria, and our subsequent agreements to investigate any and all incidents of apparent further use. We must also recall the Council's determination that those responsible for chemical-weapons use must be held accountable. It is with those determinations in mind that we put forward today's draft resolution.

Our text condemns the events of 4 April in Idlib. It expresses full support to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact-finding Mission and the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, already charged with investigating this and all such incidents, and it emphasizes the need for full access by those investigators to relevant sites and recalls the obligations of all parties in Syria to cooperate fully in that regard. We believe that that is the necessary minimum response required of the Council. We thank all Council members that have helped to develop the draft over the past week. We thank the United States as President for tabling the text for a vote, and we urge all Council members to vote in favour.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to inform the members of the Security Council that during the course of the negotiations that took place today in Moscow between the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Lavrov, and the Secretary of State of the United States, Mr. Tillerson, we proposed to the American side that we send a joint statement to the Director-General of the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Mr. Üzümcü, asking him to immediately put together an independent international mission for a visit to Khan Shaykhun, where it is alleged that chemical agents were used, and to the Shayrat air base. The United States Secretary of State is considering that proposal, and we expect that Washington, D.C., will offer it a constructive response, given the current situation.

Given what I have just said and the fact that tomorrow, on 13 April there will be a meeting of the Executive Council of the OPCW in The Hague, where all of these issues will be discussed, we feel that putting the draft resolution to a vote today does not serve a useful purpose.

The President: The Council is now ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Egypt, France, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay

Against:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Russian Federation

Abstaining:

China, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan

The President: There were 10 votes in favour, 2 against and 3 abstentions. The draft resolution has not

been adopted, owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): The conflict that has ravaged Syria has lasted for more than six years. For the people of Syria, that must feel like an eternity. Here in this Chamber, we get only so many moments to act, only so many moments to show them that hope is not dead, chances for the world to unite in condemnation of war crimes. Today was one of those moments. What happened in Khan Shaykhun last week was the worst of human acts. United Kingdom scientists have now analysed samples obtained from Khan Shaykhun, and they have tested positive for the nerve agent sarin or a sarin-like substance. We therefore share the assessment of the United States that it is highly likely that the regime was responsible for a sarin attack on Khan Shaykhun.

We recognize the need for a thorough, swift, independent investigation. This afternoon, Russia's Foreign Minister also called for such an investigation, yet Russia has vetoed a draft resolution that would support that investigation. Russia's messages are mixed, and its aims confused. The Fact-finding Mission in Syria of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Syrian people need our political support, something that we as the Security Council should have been able to give. The United Kingdom will continue to give that support and, regardless of today's vote, the work of the OPCW will continue.

We have once again encountered a Russian veto — the eighth time that Russia has used its veto to protect the Syrian regime. Today's veto is even more regrettable given that Russia was the architect of the 2013 agreement to dismantle Syria's chemical-weapon programme, an initiative that has demonstrably failed. Russia cannot now possibly claim that it opposes the use of chemical weapons. Russia has seen the same pictures that we all saw just days ago in this Chamber. How could anyone look at the faces of lifeless children and choose to veto a draft resolution condemning those deaths?

It is indefensible that Russia has chosen to protect the perpetrators of those attacks rather than work with the rest of the international community to condemn them. When those images and videos were broadcast across screens around the world, my team received a message from another child — Bana Alabed, a 7-year-old Syrian girl from Aleppo who, with the help of her mother, has given the world a window into the conflict through Twitter. The message she sent was simple. It was that we can make a difference. We must demand justice for the children. She is one voice, but one that echoes the views of millions of Syrians. Demand justice for the children.

The heartbreaking truth is that a little girl's plea will not be heard in this Chamber. Not today. But regardless of the veto today, we should trust those words. We will hold the regime to account. We will continue to work with our international partners to put an end to any use of chemical weapons and to seek justice for all the victims of these heinous chemical attacks. We will gather at the OPCW in The Hague tomorrow to discuss how best to support a credible international investigation that establishes who was responsible and paves the way to hold the culprits to account.

The catastrophe in Syria is not the way things have to be. Yesterday, Foreign Ministers from the Group of Seven (G-7) and key regional countries came together in Italy to discuss how to move forward from last week's tragedy. They gave strong support to Secretary Tillerson's visit to Moscow today to discuss how Russia could work with the international community to end the tragedy of the war in Syria. Russia has the sort of influence over the regime that could bring its use of chemical weapons and barrel bombs to an end, and could lead to a real ceasefire that would then lead to the resumption of serious political negotiations on a political transition. Those Foreign Ministers indicated that if Russia took those steps, the international community would be ready to work with it to bring peace to Syria, defeat Da'esh and terrorism and reconstruct Syria. That is the choice that Moscow has in front of it. The world now waits to see if Russia will respond to the G-7 and assume its responsibilities as a permanent member of the Security Council to help put a stop to the Al-Assad regime's use of chemical weapons and to work with the international community to bring this tragedy to an end.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): France is devastated by the result of today's voting. We deeply deplore the fact that, thanks to another Russian veto, the Security Council has been unable to agree on a simple, balanced draft resolution condemning and seeking to throw light on what happened at Khan Shaykhun. We

nonetheless strove to engage in discussion of the draft in good faith. We have failed yet again to measure up to the responsibility that we have assigned ourselves and to the fundamental values that we are supposed to support and ensure respect for. Almost four years after the Ghouta massacre in August 2013, the Council has taken a terrible step backwards.

The attack on Khan Shaykhun would appear to be the latest example of the abject duplicity of a hard-line regime. Once again, everything about it points to the Damascus regime's clear responsibility for the attack. Through it, the Syrian regime has crossed another threshold of horror and of scorn for the most basic standards and elementary principles of humanity, which, as we have seen, it has continued to flout. France has always said, not as an ideological statement but because the evidence tells us so, that the Middle East will never have peace and security as long as a regime exists that is guilty of committing war crimes, indeed crimes against humanity, in order to maintain its hold on power. That regime slaughters its own population on the pretext of fighting terrorism, while continuing to fan the flames of Da'esh.

After the attack on 4 April, a military installation of the Syrian regime that had been used for chemical bombardments was destroyed by United States air strikes. The American operation was a legitimate response to a mass crime that could not go unpunished. Bashar Al-Assad, as we have reiterated on many occasions, bears full responsibility for this development.

Russia's veto on 28 February (see S/PV.7893) of a draft resolution (S/2017/172) aimed at punishing those responsible for the chemical attacks committed several years ago already represented a dangerous indication of looming impunity. The massacre in Khan Shaykhoun should have acted as a wake-up call to all of us about our responsibilities. How can those who claim to be committed to the non-proliferation regime and the fight against impunity reject the evidence before them? How is it possible to repeatedly and in such a systematic manner evade the issue of the barbaric use of weapons of mass destruction targeting innocent people? Nothing can justify averting one's eyes from such atrocities, or dissembling, or attempting to assign blame elsewhere and trying to impose counter-narratives on the world.

France will not resign itself to the notion of the Council's impotence that some seek to impose on it. We will lend our full support to the work of United Nations and OPCW mechanisms, including in their efforts to shed light on the circumstances of the attack. We must also fully support the OPCW team responsible for the inquiry into the initial Syrian declaration. Our goal will continue to be the dismantling of the Syrian chemical-weapons programme.

France will not accept impunity for those responsible for the atrocities committed in Syria. We will spare no effort to ensure that sooner or later the perpetrators answer for their crimes. France will also work to strengthen the non-proliferation regime, which is vital for our collective security and which the Council has to date always sought to uphold.

The initiative undertaken by France, along with Mexico, on limiting the use of the veto in the case of mass atrocities is aimed at precisely situations of this kind. It is now clearly more topical than ever and reflective of our concerns.

This tragedy is yet another reminder of the fact that only a genuine political transition will allow us to guarantee peace and security for the Syrian people and a return to stability in the Middle East. We cannot wait for other crimes to be added to the long list of abuses committed by the Syrian regime, which no one, not even its closest supporters, can justify any longer.

We cannot simply give up. We owe it to the victims of this heinous chemical attack, and, more broadly speaking, to all of the victims of the Syrian tragedy. In that context, despite the fact that the veto was wielded once again today, France solemnly calls on all the members of the Security Council to come together and set aside political divisions and national interests in order to establish once again a complete ban on chemical weapons and to help bring about, on an urgent basis, a political transition in Syria, in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex).

Let us live up to our responsibilities before the judgment of history.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Egypt supported the draft resolution (S/2017/315) submitted by the United Kingdom, France and the United States owing to our interest in the Security Council carrying out its responsibilities with regard to the crimes committed against the Syrian people, particularly given the fact that our Syrian brethren have suffered

chemical attacks more than once. I reiterate that we cannot accept any impunity for such crimes.

We have supported, and will continue to support, the principle of accountability for everyone proven to have perpetrated such inhuman acts, regardless of motivation. The Council must undertake all agreed procedures aimed at determining the truth on the basis of evidence and implement the relevant resolutions. Accordingly, we express our extreme dismay at the fact that we were not able to adopt the draft resolution and thus have failed to send a message on the imperative of determining what really happened in Khan Shaykhoun.

However, I would also like to reiterate that the failure to adopt the draft must not affect in any way the objectives of the inquiry mission, on the basis of the clear mandates contained in Council resolutions. Here I call on all international, regional and Syrian parties to cooperate fully with both international mechanisms, in keeping with resolutions 2235 (2015) and 2298 (2016), in order to achieve justice. This is the least we can do for the Syrian people in the context of an issue that has deeply polarized the Council.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): Italy had hoped that the unity of the Council would be preserved in ensuring swift action following the latest horrors in the Syrian conflict.

As an elected member of the Security Council, we feel a special responsibility to live up to the expectations of the United Nations membership, which has entrusted us with helping to maintain international peace and security, a responsibility that today we were not able to uphold.

We voted in favour of the draft resolution (S/2017/315) in order to reiterate, first, our condemnation in the strongest terms of any use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances, and, secondly, our support for a full-fledged investigation into the facts in Khan Shaykhoun by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact-finding Mission and, as applicable, by the United Nations-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism. We call upon the Syrian Government and all parties in Syria to cooperate fully with the OPCW and the United Nations so as to allow for the prompt conclusion of its investigation into this heinous incident.

Thirdly, there is a need to fight impunity. So long as no one is held accountable and faces tangible consequences for war crimes and crimes against humanity, the incentive will remain to continue to commit them.

We will do our best to ensure that even in the absence of a specific Security Council resolution, the mechanisms in place work to clarify the facts and responsibilities relating to the Khan Shaykhoun attack as soon as possible.

It is deeply disturbing that international humanitarian law and the international non-proliferation architecture continue to be blatantly violated. Upholding respect for these norms, including resolution 2118 (2013), and the Chemical Weapons Convention, which is the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime, should have been a shared priority, one that unifies us instead of dividing us.

The challenges of the Syrian crisis require strong cohesion and cooperation on the part of the international community. There is therefore no alternative to engaging and trying to find common solutions. Italy remains committed to working with the other members of the Council and the other members of the international community in doing so.

As I said this morning, the international community has the duty to stop the horrendous suffering of the Syrian civilian population through a political solution and to bring back peace and hope for the future in that country.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): Japan voted in favour of the draft resolution (S/2017/315) proposed by France, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The reported use of chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhoun was an affront to humanity and a blatant violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Given the gravity of the situation, it is very important for the Council to express its determination to address this issue.

It is truly regrettable that we have witnessed another instance of division in the Council despite the clear need to address the incident. What just happened here does not and must not affect the Council's determination concerning this matter. We must expeditiously determine whether chemical weapons were actually used, identify those who are responsible and hold them accountable. Japan welcomes the opening of the investigation by the Fact-finding Mission to the Syrian Arab Republic of the Organization for the Prohibition

of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and urges it to report its conclusion as soon as possible.

The Syrian Government and all parties in Syria have the obligation under resolutions 2118 (2013) and 2235 (2015) to fully cooperate with the OPCW and the United Nations, including the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). In addressing the continuous allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, Japan believes that it is increasingly important to further improve coordination between the Fact-finding Mission, the JIM and the Council so that the Council can react more swiftly to the alleged use of chemical weapons.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China is deeply concerned by the use of chemical weapons in Syria and firmly opposes the use of chemical weapons by any country, group or individual. China is aware that the Syrian Government has written to the Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) requesting that the organization send an investigative mission to Khan Shaykhun and the Shayrat airbase to carry out an investigation. China supports the OPCW and the United Nations conducting a comprehensive, objective and an impartial investigation into the relevant cases so as to arrive at a conclusion on the basis of solid evidence that can stand the test of time and be substantiated by facts, thereby bringing the perpetrators of the attack and other responsible parties to justice.

Preserving unity within the Security Council is of critical importance to any solution within the context of the Syrian question. It has been our long-standing hope that the Security Council would speak as one voice on the chemical weapons issue in Syria. We had been working tirelessly for a draft resolution that would have enjoyed the support of all Council members. China highly commends the elected members of the Council for their hard work in trying to reach consensus among Council members. We deeply regret the failure to reach such a consensus on the draft resolution. The attempt to push through a draft resolution in which serious division still remained among Council members was destined to undermine Council unity and impair efforts to seeking a political solution.

The draft resolution on which we voted contains language that condemns the use of chemical weapons that took place within Syria and calls for an investigation into the relevant instances, which is language that China supports. Nevertheless, some other elements of the text may well have been amended to secure consensus. As such, China abstained in the voting on the draft resolution.

The protracted conflict in Syria has caused massive civilian casualties. A political solution continues to be the only way forward to rid the Syrian people of their suffering. Military means simply do not work but only exacerbate the suffering of the Syrian people. China calls on the relevant parties to stay the course towards a political settlement and uphold the Syrian-owned and Syrian-led principle, support the role of the United Nations as the main channel of mediation, and get behind the efforts undertaken by Special Envoy De Mistura. We must step up all four parallel tracks, namely preserving the ceasefire, seeking a political solution, coordinating counter-terrorism activities and providing humanitarian assistance so as to facilitate the search by all parties for a solution that is acceptable to all through the Geneva talks.

China hopes that the international community will work in concert to play a constructive role in securing a comprehensive, impartial and appropriate solution to the Syrian issue without delay.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation voted against the draft resolution (S/2017/315) on the chemical weapons incident in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April. That outcome was predetermined as we have consistently expressed our categorical disagreement with the distorted nature of the document, which, as events and consultations unfolded, did not undergo the slightest change. Russian concerns and priorities were ignored and brushed aside under artificial pretences. The primary problem was the fact that the draft resolution by the troika designated the guilty party prior to an independent and objective investigation. That approach is incompatible with legal standards. Those members were aware of our concerns, but, once again, put their unilateral and consequently doomed draft resolution to the vote. Has it become a national sport to intentionally undermine the unity of the Security Council?

The strike on the Syrian air base, which was undertaken before an international investigation was undertaken, was in violation of international law and lacked the approval of the Security Council. Voting in favour of the Western troika draft resolution would have meant legitimizing those illegal actions, which from the

point of view of international law and common sense is absolutely unacceptable. If our partners believe that it is necessary to adopt a generic resolution on chemicals in Syria, then we need to sit down together at the table and seriously agree on a comprehensive document, in which we will naturally include our assessments, backed by facts, on the use of chemical weapons by terrorists. In other words, we need to work on the basis of mutually taking into account each other's interests and concerns.

If the goal of our Western partners in the draft resolution was to react to specific events in Khan Shaykhun, then, instead of adopting a one-sided anti-Syrian bias, it should have aimed at ensuring that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) be able to implement its mandate in conducting an impartial investigation. That is precisely the main difference between the Western and Russian draft resolutions. The troika talks about the investigation in a very unclear manner, through its routine mention and emphasizing the fact that the OPCW Fact-finding Mission to the Syrian Arab Republic will, at its discretion, determine the places that it would like to visit. Incidentally, a big question mark hovers over whether it would like to proceed in that manner.

The Russian document contains a clear mandate to do that and in such a way as to leave one doubt that every available resource and all means were exhausted in preparing its conclusions, and, most importantly, that there was a visit to the site at which the incident occurred. We also insist that the staffing of the mission should be decided based on a broad geographical diversity. The results of the investigation must be trusted.

It is of extreme concern to us that since receiving news of the alleged use of chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun eight days ago, no concrete steps have been taken to investigate the incident through the relevant international entities. As usual, the OPCW Fact-finding Mission appears to be set up to work in remote mode, without visiting the sites where the incidents occurred. We believe that that amounts to a simulacrum of taking action, which only discredits the OPCW.

After what happened, we are going to have to be much more rigorous in taking a look at what the OPCW and the Fact-Finding Mission do. We are convinced that we need to have a full and immediate investigation.

The possibilities for such an investigation have not been exhausted. In order to have one, however, an international team of highly qualified specialists needs to visit the area of Khan Shaykhun and the Al-Shayrat air base that was struck by missiles as soon as possible. In our view, the goal of the visit to Khan Shaykhun is to determine whether or not chemical weapons were used there and, if so, what were the circumstances and who could bear the responsibility for such use. A visit to the Al-Shayrat air base is also necessary, because that is how we can determine whether or not the toxic substances allegedly used in the bombing of Khan Shaykhun had been previously stored at Al-Shayrat.

We underscore the fact that in line with the Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2118 (2013), all parties in Syria have to provide international inspectors with free and unfettered access to the areas of alleged chemical-weapons incidents. Damascus has displayed, in its position statement on that point, openness and readiness to cooperate. On 11 April, the Syrian authorities approached the Director-General of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, Mr. Üzümcü, with an official request to send a mission to Khan Shaykhun and Al-Shayrat. We need to make use of that proposal by the Syrian authorities, instead of doing what we did after the chemical-weapons attacks in eastern Ghouta and Khan al-Asal, when people ended up being afraid to carry out an investigation. There were all sort of provocations there, and we almost got to the point where some permanent members of the Security Council were on the verge of armed attacks on Syrian territory. Fortunately, reason prevailed.

Like the Syrian authorities, the general coordinator of the opposition's High Negotiations Committee, Mr. Hijab, sent a letter to the United Nations with a request to initiate an investigation at Khan Shaykhun and said that he stood ready to help in the investigation, which, for us, means providing safe access to the site of the alleged chemical incident. In other words, we have ended up with a very unusual situation where both the Government officials in Damascus and the opposition together are asking for an independent investigation, while the OPCW is doing nothing, for reasons unknown.

But if we are to talk professionally, then, in order to carry out an investigation by competent international authorities of what took place in Khan Shaykhun, and by that we mean first and foremost the OPCW, there is no need for a new Security Council resolution, and that is something that was being said during the past week by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, except that he was putting a different spin

on those words. It turns out that for him a resolution was necessary in order to predetermine the outcome of the investigation. We should not forget the fact that our country was present at the inception of a unique, unprecedented process of the chemical demilitarization of Syria, which — and this has been acknowledged by authoritative international organizations — was carried out successfully.

However, some capitals still have an anti-Syrian-regime slant. We are left with the very clear impression that in actual fact the authors of the draft resolution do not want to work with the people whom they have sponsored and who feel very much at ease in Idlib province. They do not want to fulfil their responsibility to make sure that international specialists have free and safe access. Once again, let me repeat, they are afraid of an impartial investigation that could show that there is a developed system for manipulating chemical weapons. We have every reason to believe that after Khan Shaykhun other provocations by extremists using toxic substances could follow.

We once again emphasize that collective efforts today should be aimed at supporting the peace process using the Astana and Geneva platforms to strengthen the ceasefire regime and jointly combat terrorism, using a single standard. One of the first steps here should be the launching of an impartial, unbiased and truly independent investigation of the tragedy in Khan Shaykhun, which necessarily includes travelling to the place of the incident. Remote investigations must no longer be used. We are looking forward to the specific decisions that will be issued on that matter on 13 April, namely, at the meeting of the Executive Council of the OPCW on that date.

Once again I would like to ask speakers not to insult and offend Russia in their statements. We have to remain within some bounds of courtesy.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): There are two points that we have regularly stressed since we joined the Security Council in connection with actions taken by the Security Council on chemical-weapons matters.

The first is the unity of the Council. The rationale for that is that the alternative, namely, division within the Security Council, is counterproductive in any effort to ensure the cessation of the use of chemical weapons. It is also inimical to the peace process.

Secondly, a major step was taken only a few weeks ago in terms of removing chemical weapons from Syria. That was a major achievement, which should serve as an example regardless of any doubts now with respect to how effectively it has been implemented. That is why it is unfortunate and regrettable that the Council today was unable to respond to the report of the use of chemical weapons in Idlib on 4 April 2017.

We do not really believe that it would have been that hard to reach consensus on a draft resolution, because what the resolution was supposed do was to call for was a thorough investigation to ensure accountability based on the results of an independent, professional and impartial process. There was certainly a possibility for us to reach the necessary compromise on the sticking issue that many of us had concerns about. What could have easily resolved the issue was to turn to already agreed language from previous resolutions. That language is strong enough to convey the message and ensure that the objective is achieved, namely, to hold those responsible to account. We tried, as the 10 elected members of the Council, to work towards that end. We thank China for its readiness to look at the positive aspects of that effort.

All parties undoubtedly have an obligation to cooperate with the Fact-Finding Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which was stated very clearly in the past. It would have been easier to resort to the language that I referred to earlier to achieve the necessary consensus, because no one in the Council opposes the main thrust of the draft resolution calling for an investigation. That is what the wider membership of the United Nations and the rest of the world expected from the Security Council today. They are, no doubt, very sad that we have not been able to send the right message.

As we stated clearly last week, we were certainly inclined to look at the draft resolution favourably, because it simply requests that an investigation into an incident that potentially constitutes a grave violation of international law take place. Our hope and expectation was that the paragraph in the draft resolution that caused us and other Council members some concern would be handled through consultations. It is really unfortunate that the Council was not able to reach consensus and lost the opportunity to send a powerful and unified message to the world about the use of chemical weapons, which represent an affront to all humankind.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): Sweden has repeatedly expressed its outrage over the abhorrent and unacceptable, reported chemical attacks in Khan Shaykhun. The use of chemical weapons is not only a clear violation of international law, but also a threat to international peace and security. We, as members of the Security Council, have a responsibility to take action in response. That should not be a polarizing issue. It is a core duty of the Security Council.

As an elected member, Sweden has worked tirelessly in order to ensure the urgent adoption of a strong resolution that would condemn the reported attack, support a prompt and thorough investigation and hold those responsible to account. All efforts to that end were exhausted over the past few days. The Council had the chance to speak with one voice against the illegal use of chemical weapons. Unity in the Council would have strengthened the hand of the ongoing investigations and sent a clear message about this Council's rejection of chemical weapons. We are therefore deeply disappointed that it was not possible to find such unity on an issue where there should be common ground. We regret that the draft resolution was not adopted because of a Russian veto. The Council must come together so that those responsible for this horrendous attack will be held to account. We will continue our efforts in that regard.

We trust that the mechanisms in place will ensure a rapid, full and impartial investigation to establish all facts. We urge all parties and especially the Government of Syria to cooperate fully in accordance with resolution 2118 (2013). When the reports by the Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism on the attack in Khan Shaykhun are available, this Council must act unitedly upon those findings.

As was discussed this morning, we must, now more than ever, intensify our efforts to reinvigorate the political process led by the United Nations, revitalise the ceasefire and ensure humanitarian access. The only way to end the suffering in Syria is through a transitional political process in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

Mr. Llorenty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): To begin, Bolivia would like to reiterate its robust condemnation in the strongest possible terms of the use of chemical weapons. Such acts are unjustified and criminal at all times, irrespective of the pretext for the use of chemical weapons, whomever the victims may be or wherever such an attack takes place.

Bolivia would also like to underscore the pressing need for an independent, impartial, thorough and conclusive investigation to take place into the events that took place a few days ago in Syria. Bolivia voted against the draft resolution because it believes that the Security Council should not be used as a sounding board for the propaganda for war or interventionism. It should not be used as a pawn to be sacrificed in the chess game of war. The draft resolution submitted today was the result of negotiations from which some members were unfortunately excluded. We would like to draw attention to the fact that draft resolutions that are not supported by consensus are being introduced. We already know in advance that they will be vetoed by permanent members of the Security Council. What is the point of such exercises?

These draft resolutions seem to be used as an instrument to influence the discussions that are taking place between Russia and the United States in Moscow. Is that perhaps the pretext for what happened today? Is the Security Council being used as a pawn for such purposes? Are those who put forward such proposals really doing so for the benefit of the Syrian people or are they doing so for their own political or military reasons? We believe that it is a contradiction to submit to the Security Council draft resolutions — making use of multilateral tools — after unilateral steps have already been taken.

Bolivia will make itself fully available to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and support its efforts as it pursues its required investigation. We once again call for unity in the Council. It is not just about supporting the peace process in Syria and guaranteeing humanitarian access so that aid can reach all victims of the terrible conflict raging in the country. We also have to uphold unity in order to fulfill our responsibility as outlined in the Charter of the United Nations and by the international community.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We are confident that there is no solution to the question of Syria besides a political one. We should all make every possible effort to ensure that we reach it. My country is deeply concerned about and strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons, which occurred in Idlib province earlier in April. All interested parties,

including the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, should ensure secure and unimpeded access for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism so that it can carry out its investigation in a professional, objective and fair manner, as outlined in its mandate in resolution 2235 (2015).

We strongly believe that the Security Council, as the single organ entrusted with maintaining international peace and security, should preserve its unity at such a critical stage. Elected members of the Security Council worked hard to find a middle ground and ensure a united, efficient approach to the issue. We express our readiness to work further with Council members on the compromised text. The world does not want to see tensions and ineffectiveness characterize the Council. Rather, it wants to see a unified and tangible approach to carry forward the Astana and Geneva processes, all in the interest of the Syrian people.

Finally, we call on all parties to exert greater political will and unite through dialogue and compromise in order to find a political solution to the crisis in Syria.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to reiterate once more that nothing can justify the atrocity that is the use of chemical weapons. We are party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Senegal reiterates its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons on 4 April in Khan Shaykhun in Idlib province. That is why my delegation naturally supported the draft resolution submitted today by the United States, France and the United Kingdom, seeking to uncover the truth about the attack on a transparent, unbiased and impartial basis.

Members of the Security Council and the Secretary-General requested the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, through its Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, to pursue its efforts to professionally pool and analyse the information coming in in order to assign responsibility for the use of chemical weapons and enable the Council to take necessary measures. In addition to shedding light on what happened on 4 April in the Idlib province, we call for the spirit of consensus that prevailed when we discussed resolutions 2118 (2013) and 2235 (2015), which represent progress in the area of chemical weapons in Syria. I would like to underscore the need to find a political solution to the crisis on the basis of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2016), which can promote a positive outcome to the crisis.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): There is a cliché that says that the first victim in war is the truth. Although that applies to wars of any kind, it is particularly true of this war. We have States and non-State actors participating. Some States seem to have been invited to participate, while other States seem not to have been invited but consider that they have every right to interfere. There are terrorists, both blatant and disguised. There are dozens of armed groups that supposedly stand for something. Some claim to have religious affiliation. That, of course, complicates everything, because if in a war somebody thinks that God is on their side, then it is difficult to persuade them to lay down their arms without being considered an apostate or a traitor. In the twenty-first century there still seem to be people that believe that God is to be found wielding the barrel of a gun.

We voted in favour of the draft resolution because, on the one hand, we firmly condemn the continued use of chemical weapons in Syria. Secondly, the draft made explicit the information required to conduct a broad-ranging, thorough and independent investigation.

We need to find the truth. A group of members of the Council sought, throughout last week and in the beginning of this week, to try to find a balance between the different positions around this table, in order to enable a broad and thorough investigation that would bring us closer to the truth. Unfortunately, events have come together in such a way as to prevent that from happening, and once again the Security Council has embarked on a process that resembles the novel of García Márquez, "Chronicle of a Death Foretold".

The privileges that distinguish the various Council members calls to mind an expression from the novel of George Orwell, "Animal Farm", namely, that some animals are more equal than others. That legal, but dishonest, imbalance means that many members are in a situation where they have to choose the lesser of two evils in terms of the options before them.

We would like to reiterate our position and the position of the 121 signatories to the Code of Conduct, according to which those members in possession of the right of veto must refrain from the use of such veto when faced with war crimes, which the recent attack in Khan Shaykhun clearly is.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): Following the horrible chemical weapons attack in Idlib in Syria on 4 April, we have all had several opportunities to express our national positions on the matter. Today, Ukraine voted in favour of the draft resolution condemning that heinous crime and demanding its immediate and thorough investigation. Any use of chemical weapons is a flagrant violation of international law and a war crime. The Security Council should therefore act swiftly and resolutely in response to the continuous massive attacks, thus preventing further attempts to commit such abhorrent crimes, as well as eradicating the chemical threat in the region. That has not happened, and today I feel ashamed, because this body has failed to do its job. It failed again today as images of dying children lay in front of us, and at a time when the world expects the Security Council to act in the aftermath of a horrible crime. The vote was a test of the Council's credibility, and we did not pass. What we have just heard from the Russian delegation epitomizes that failure and is symbolic of the Council's inability to do the right thing, even in cases of the most outrageous international crimes. The Council's continued inability to address chemical attacks in Syria is leading to further impunity and sending a signal to perpetrators that they can get away with murder. We deeply regret that today the Council missed yet another chance to fulfil its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations.

Despite the voting results, I commend the efforts of those delegations that were involved in preparing the draft resolution, which sought a comprehensive and thorough investigation of that tragedy. We appreciate the fact that a firm stance in defending and restoring respect for justice and international law won the support of the majority of Council members, notwithstanding the attempts of some delegations to distort the facts.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

Abdel Hamid Al-Youssef put his nine-month-old twin babies in the ground last week. Each branch of Abdel's extended family reportedly got its own trench to bury their dead. One family, 22 victims. Abdel held his twins in his arms. He tried to keep himself together. He tried to stop his tears. All Abdel could say before putting his twins in their final resting place was "say goodbye baby, say goodbye". They were two of the smallest victims of the Assad regime's vicious and barbaric chemical attack.

No one anywhere in the world should ever have to face that kind of suffering. That is why the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France put forward today's draft resolution. It was a step toward holding the perpetraiors of that chemical attack accountable, and I thank those members who supported that effort. But, with its veto, Russia said "no" to accountability. Russia said "no" to cooperation with the United Nations independent investigation, and Russia said "no" to a draft resolution that would have helped to promote peace in Syria. Russia once again has chosen to side with Assad, even as the rest of the world — including the Arab world — has overwhelmingly come together to condemn that murderous regime.

Russia said that the draft resolution was biased and that the Assad regime was not involved. The draft resolution simply emphasized the information that the regime is already required to provide to investigators. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism has told us many times that Assad has not provided the access needed to investigate. We need to continue to support the Mechanism's role in further investigating what happened on 4 April. If the regime is innocent, as Russia claims, the information requested by the draft resolution would have vindicated them. Unfortunately, this was Russia's eighth veto on the Syrian resolution. The United States takes no pleasure in seeing Russia isolated again in the Security Council. We want to work with Russia to advance a political process for Syria. We want Russia to use its influence over the Assad regime to stop the madness and the cruelty that we see every day on the ground.

Today's vote could have been a turning point. Once more, today's voting could have served as the moment when Russia saw that its interests do not lie with a murderous dictator, but rather with the many countries in the international community, including those all across the Middle East, that want to end the conflict.

By its failure, Russia will continue to be isolated. We urge Russia to join forces with the overwhelming number of countries that are pushing for a political solution. The international community has spoken. Russia now has a lot to prove.

To Assad and the Syrian Government, I say that they have no friends in the world after their horrible actions. The United States is watching their actions very closely. The days of their arrogance and disregard

of humanity are over. Their excuses will no longer be heard. I suggest that they look at today's vote very carefully and heed our warning.

I now resume my functions as the President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country condemns and rejects in the strongest terms any use of chemical weapons and any other type of weapon of mass destruction as a crime against humanity that is to be reviled, immoral and unjustifiable in any circumstance. The target for such weapons is the Syrian people, who are still the primary victims of the crimes of armed terrorist groups that did not hesitate to use chemical weapons against them. Let me stress to the Security Council that my country is as eager as ever to uncover the real criminal responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

On the basis of these firm principles, my country's Government acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), implemented all its commitments under the Convention, and has made an achievement unprecedented in the history of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) by ending the Syrian chemical weapons programme in record time and irreversibly, as certified by the statement of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism that was presented to the Security Council in June 2014.

As I told the Council this morning (see S/PV.7921), in the context of its ongoing transparent cooperation with the OPCW, my country sent a letter yesterday to the Director General of the organization, calling on him to send a neutral, fair and professional mission to Khan Shaykhun and the Shayrat air base to find out the truth of what occurred — comprehensively, transparently and fairly. My country, Syria, stresses its readiness to ensure the mission's safe access to Shayrat air base in order to ascertain whether sarin had been or is stockpiled there.

As for the town of Khan Shaykhun, regrettably I am forced to tell the Council that access to that town must be guaranteed by the terrorist group Jabhat al-Nusra and its associate terrorist organizations operating there, via the Governments of States that support, guide and direct that organization on the ground, foremost among which are France, Britain, the United States, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Israel.

My country is the primary stakeholder in uncovering the truth. In principle, we support any action of the Security Council to attain such truth. However, we object to draft resolutions containing sly political language, prejudging the results of any investigation and leaning towards leading the investigation to indict the Syrian Government a priori, as did my colleagues the representatives of the Britain and France earlier here. The three Western States on the Council have become used to incorporating similar language in previous draft resolutions, leading to their misues later on by those States to justify intervention in the internal affairs of other States and military aggression against them, as was the case in Libya and other countries.

Whoever reads today's draft resolution (S/2017/315) carefully will see that its true objective is not to uncover the truth but to absolutely violate Syrian sovereignty and exploit any information that could have been collected through the draft resolution, had it been adopted, in order to help armed terrorist groups supported by the three States and their proxies in the region to target the personnel, sites and capacities of the Syrian Government and army, under the pretext of looking for the "chemical Godot", as was the case in Iraq.

If the sponsors of today's draft resolution do not see any benefit in the mechanisms available at the OPCW., why do they not introduce another draft resolution to end the work of the OPCW? They might, for instance, clear out its archives and keep them in steel boxes that will not be opened for 60 years, just as they did with the archives of the inspection committees seeking weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. My country did not use atomic weapons against Hiroshima and Nagaski. My country did not use chemical and biological weapons against Viet Nam. My country did not use enriched uranium against Iraq. My country did not test atomic weapons against Algerians, alive, in the Algerian Sahara.

On 31 March, in our talks in Geneva, I provided Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura with early and documented reports about the possession by armed terrorist groupss in rural Damascus, Idlib and Hama of toxic chemical materials to be used as weapons against civilians. I also warned him that the facts were falsified and that the evidence and accusations were fabricated

against the Syrian Government, as on previous occasions. I related this information to Mr. De Mistura five days before the incident in Khan Shaykhun. As I said this morning, my country's Government has addressed more than 90 letters, the latest only one day ago, to the various relevant United Nations bodies, including documented information on the possession by terrorist organizations, led by Da'esh and Jabhat Al-Nusra, of toxic chemical materitals, including sarin, which they obtained from Libya through Turkish territory, with the full knowledge of the Turkish authorities.

The sponsors of today's draft resolution know full well that, since my country acceded to the CWC, the resolutions of the Security Council and the OPCW have been the sufficient and appropriate international legal framework in that regard. I call on the rest of the States members of the Security Council to use logical and rational trial, seek clear and genuine responses to the questions raised by this painful incident and by the reactions of the United States, Britain and France. Let us try to answer the following questions.

Why did the videos and photographs of the Khan Shaykhun incident come only from organizations claiming to work in the humanitarian field, whereas they are directly linked to armed terrorist groups on the ground. I refer here specifically to a group called the White Helmets, which seems to have won an Oscar for Best Actor. We have repeatedly provided the Security Council with pictures, films and documented evidence that members of that organization work under the direction of the British intelligence services and are funded by the United States and Britain. That is the first question.

The second question is: Has anyone read the report issued by the organization Swedish Doctors for Human Rights, exposing the duplicity of the so-called White Helmets?

The third question is: Is anyone here aware that the British doctor of Pakistani decent, Shajul Islam, who was with the armed terrorist groups on the ground in Khan Shaykhun and was the main witness in all the provocative media campaigns against the Syrian Government, was imprisoned for 13 months in the Britain, charged with terrorist acts, including the kidnapping of British journalists in Syria? A terrorist criminal becomes an eye witness, and this fabricated media campaign is based on his testimony.

Furthermore, how can anyone who pretends to seek the truth through international legitimacy assume the right to perpetrate an act of military aggression against a site that they claim to have been the origin of aircraft that flew off to strike Khan Shaykhun with chemical weapons?

I urge Council members to read the book entitled *The REAL Benghazi Story: What the White House and Hillary Don't Want You to Know*, by Aaron Klein, which details the coordination and mediation role undertaken by the late United States Ambassador to Libya, Chris Stevens, in operations to export weapons and sarin from Libya to the States sponsors of terrorism in Syria, first and foremost Turkey. I also invite them to read a scientific report published by Theodore Postol, an American professor working at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It evaluates the White House claims of the alleged events in Khan Shaykhun. He believes that the information on which United States officials based their allegations against the Syrian Government points merely to a crater in a road north of Khan Shaykhun. He concludes that these data seem more consistent with the possibility that the munitions were on the ground and notdropped from the air.

What does my colleague, the representative of France, call the killing by French aircraft of 200 civilians in the village of Toukhan Al-Kubra in rule Aleppo, on 19 July 2016? And what does my colleague, the representative of the United States, call the killing by American aircraft of 237 civilians in the town of Al-Mansura, after they had fled Da esh in the Raqqa region.My delegation stresses that it is continuing to implement all its commitments under the CWC and to wage our war on terror, which will not stop regardless of any political blackmail, media campaigns or shedding of innocent blood.

In conclusion, my delegation thanks and expresses its appreciation to the Russian Federation and Bolivia for voting against the draft resolution today, as well as those delegations that abstained in the voting, in their conviction of the sinister objectives behind the draft resolution, the most basic principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and their belief that such texts affect the credibility of international action and institutions and threaten international peace and security.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.